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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
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**Testimony of Rep. Mary Mushinsky (85<sup>th</sup>) in Support of PHB 6404, An Act  
Concerning the Operation of Mechanical Loading or Unloading Equipment  
at Certain Solid Waste Facilities**

Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee  
February 20, 2007 2:00 p.m. LOB Rm 2A

Thanks to the co-chairs and committee for raising this bill. Please make a technical correction: change "mechanical" to "hydraulic" where it appears in the bill and title. This bill was sparked by the death in May 2006 of Robert Gootkin of Wallingford, a 15 year employee of CRRA's Covanta waste-to-energy plant in Wallingford. The plant processes waste for Wallingford and 4 other CRRA towns. These workers provide a critical sanitary service to the public.

Mr. Gootkin was accidentally crushed by an hydraulic energy device used in the loading/unloading process; he was pinned against a wall, and later found dead. According to the family, a camera was not working to sweep the room (it was fixed in one position), and the victim was not found for a period of time. A non-working camera is no substitute for a second worker who might have witnessed the accident.

I believe we should require the use of two persons rather than one around hydraulic loading/unloading equipment because of the danger of this machinery. A second worker would act as a safety buddy to remind the first worker of safety procedures. It is easy to forget a safety step if a worker is tired or distracted. The second worker could also find an injured employee swiftly and maybe save the worker's life. It is better to protect the workers, even if it means an increase in waste handling fees.

The family also requested an addition to this bill or another related bill to require workman's comp benefits to cover funeral expenses; I understand from LCO this is already covered. In response to your question, it would be appropriate to specify that the two workers be located in the same work area. Thank you for your assistance.